



THE BEST OF ATHENS AND THE PELOPONNESE

Chase the legends of antiquity from Athens to Nafplio on this immersive and in-depth journey through the Peloponnese.

Tailor-Made Journeys, Suggested Itineraries



Europe, Greece



11 days from AU\$24,885 pp



Private

Journey Overview

Separated from the mainland by the Gulf of Corinth, the Peloponnese is Greece's mythical heartland, where ancient legends abound and Gods once walked the earth. While the archaeological finds of this rugged part of Greece are staggering, it's not all about the ancients. Today the Peloponnese is an unspoiled collage of landscapes, from soaring mountains and lush valleys to gushing rivers and seaside villages. Its beaches, especially along the Mani Peninsula, are the most pristine in the country and the further south you get, the more splendid the isolation. Chase the legends of antiquity from Athens to Nafplio on this immersive and in-depth journey through the Peloponnese.

Journey Highlights

- Walk in the footsteps of Plato and Socrates, discover vibrant and atmospheric Athenian neighbourhoods, and be awed by the staggering ruins of the Acropolis and Parthenon
- Venture into the rugged heights of the Arcadian mountains to clammer around the bold Temple of Apollo, and see history come alive at the ancient stadium of the Olympic Games
- Discover the dazzling underwater world of the Diros Caves, home to crystal-studded stalactites and stalagmites in all colours of the rainbow
- Recline and enjoy a cocktail, order classic Greek tapas overlooking the ocean, or take a dip in the crystal-clear waters on the famed Mani Peninsula
- Wander through cobbled paths admiring neoclassical buildings, colourful bougainvillea and classic tavernas in romantic Nafplio
- Delve into the Bronze Age civilisation of Mycenaean, learn about the fascinating healing cult of Asclepios, and uncover the ancient warrior capital of Sparta



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive Athens

Welcome to Athens. Upon arrival, meet your Guardian Angel who will accompany you to your hotel in the heart of the city, for assisted check in. With rooftop views over the fabled Acropolis, Syntagma Square and the Parliament, your evening is at leisure.

Hotel Grande Bretagne

Day 2: Athens

Wake up in multilayered Athens, the cradle of western civilisation. Today you'll walk in the footsteps of Plato and Socrates, discover ancient monuments dedicated to the gods of antiquity, and see Athens — past and present — come to life, as you traverse the sites with your expert guide.

Begin at the Acropolis and its Parthenon, sitting proud atop the city skyline. Walk through the ruins and monuments, gaze up at the towering marble columns, and learn how archaeology, art, mythology and philosophy all came together to give us this marvel of the ancient world. Take in stunning views over the Plaka Quarter, the ancient Agora and the Theater of Dionysus, where the tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides were performed. Continue to the state-of-the-art Acropolis Museum, which deconstructs over 4000 ancient artifacts to convey what daily life was like for the ancient Athenians.

Afterwards, stroll through the Plaka, in the foothills of the Acropolis, one of Athens' oldest and most atmospheric neighbourhoods. There are plenty of cafes and tavernas from which to grab a bite, sip a coffee and admire the views. Your evening culminates with an exclusive dinner on the terrace of the Acropolis Museum, taking in sweeping panoramas over Athens and the Acropolis illuminated at night (additional cost).

Hotel Grande Bretagne / Meals: B

Day 3: Athens - Olympia

Head west to one of ancient Greece's most significant cities, Corinth, perched on the isthmus between the mainland and the Peloponnese. Corinth grew from a Neolithic settlement to a rich and powerful Roman city under the reign of Julius Caesar. Venture into the rugged heights of the Arcadian mountains to clammer around the innovative Temple of Apollo admiring its Doric columns and learning about its bold artistic inspirations.

Follow your historical guide around the rest of the Corinthian ruins hearing their unique insights. Extended excavations have unearthed the Roman Forum, temples, fountains, porticoes and baths. Continue to the Ancient Corinth Archaeological Museum which places everything into remarkable historical context. Your guide will unravel mysteries from the prehistoric period to the political centre's establishment as a powerful entity.

From here, settle into your accommodation with scenic views over the Arcadian Mountains. The evening is at leisure.

Hotel Europa / Meals: B**Day 4: Olympia - Areopolis**

Set out on a full-day tour of Ancient Olympia. Full of blood, passion and extraordinary feats of athleticism, the Olympic Games were the sporting, social and cultural highlight of the ancient Greek calendar for almost 12 centuries. Imagine the roar of up to 45,000 riotous, gore-hungry spectators as you wander around the stadium. From the marathon to the olive wreath, listen to your guide's fascinating insights into the games, the celebrations and the athletes' lives. Next, learn all about the mythology of the god of sky and thunder Zeus, as you traverse the remains of dozens of buildings on the archaeological site.

Continue to the Mani Peninsula, a timeless region of fortified villages, sleepy fishing coves, emerald waters and captivating sunsets. This will be your base for the next two days.

Bassa Maina Villas & Suites / Meals: B

Day 5: Areopolis

Discover the dazzling underwater world of the Diros Caves, home to spectacular crystal-studded stalactites and stalagmites in all colours of the rainbow. The caves have been inhabited since Neolithic times and are still not fully explored to this day; some say the network extends all the way to Sparta. Fossilised bones from panther, hyena, lion, deer and ferret, and the largest deposit of hippo bones in Europe, have all been found in the cave, as well as ceramics suggesting a human presence.

Next explore the small town of Areopli, which was a starting point for the revolution against the Ottoman empire. Wander through the cobblestone alleys, passing stone houses with colourful doors and flowers, towards the historic church of Taxiarchon. Savour delicacies in tavernas and cafes, and don't miss the traditional bakery of Milia, the oldest in the entire Peloponnese. The evening is at leisure.

Bassa Maina Villas & Suites / Meals: B

Day 6: Areopolis

Spend a full day exploring the dramatic coastline of the Mani Peninsula, famous for its rustic villages, impossibly clear waters and pristine beaches. If you're seeking water, head to the seaside village of Skoutari with its golden sands set into a deep curved bay. Recline and enjoy a cocktail on one of the many lounges, order classic Greek tapas from one of the beach tavernas, or take a dip in the turquoise waters. There is also a small 12th century church to wander through. Continue to the bay of Kotronas with its scooped out small coves clustered around the village. Alypa is also known for its lovely beaches, made of pearly white pebbles.

Bassa Maina Villas & Suites / Meals: B

Day 7: Areopolis - Nafplio

Next stop, Nafplio. En route visit the city of Sparta, where you'll walk the same land as the famed Spartan warriors who once forged the most powerful army in Greece. Modern Sparta is famous for its olive oil, which is a staple of the heart-happy Greek diet. Head to the Museum of Olive Oil to discover how it fuels nutrition, and what its deeper meaning is to Greek mythology, religion, manners and customs.

Continue to romantic Nafplio. From its scenic harbour and blue ocean vista to the fairy-tale castle just off the shoreline, Nafplio is one of the most beautiful towns in the Peloponnese. This evening, settle into your accommodation nestled below the fortress of Palamidi.

Nafplia Palace Hotel & Villas / Meals: B

Day 8: Nafplio

Spend a full day discovering Nafplio with your driver and guide, beginning with the Palamidi Fortress — an architectural masterpiece. Hear the story of the Venetians who liberated the city from the Turks in the 18th century, via a long and brutal siege, and soak up the sumptuous views over the bay and town. If you're feeling active, brave the 857 steps down to the old town where you begin your walking tour. Wander through the cobbled paths admiring neoclassical buildings, colourful bougainvillea and large squares bordered by classic tavernas. Visit the folklore or archaeological museum, and one of the many ornate churches. Along the way sample Loukoumadas drizzled in honey and cream-based Greek Gelato. Finish with a visit to a local artisan, a master weaver or a ceramic studio.

Nafplio is famed for its oranges and seafood. With your evening at leisure, perhaps head to one of the many tavernas to sample fresh meze of octopus and fish, with live local music.

Nafplia Palace Hotel & Villas / Meals: B

Day 9: Nafplio

Another day of exploration with your driver and guide awaits. Visit the archaeological city of Asine, which hovers out over the blue Argolic Gulf. Your guide will explain how the city survived the collapse of the Mycenaean civilisation with fascinating stories all the way up to WW II.

Next, wander the intriguing sanctuary of Asclepios. The vast site is full of temples and hospitals devoted to the healing cult of Asclepios — one of the most popular cults of antiquity. Hear stories of the physicians who served, and the patients who flocked here in search of cures. Continue to the ancient theatre and test its acoustics for yourself as you imagine being surrounded by the applause of 14,000 Mycenaean spectators. Your guide will enlighten you with ancient tricks of acoustic engineering via its rows of limestone seating.

Nafplia Palace Hotel & Villas / Meals: B

Day 10: Nafplio - Athens

Make your way back to Athens today, stopping en-route to explore one of Greece's most important archaeology sites, the fortified citadel of ancient Mycenae. The Mycenaean civilisation informed the dominant culture of Greece during the late Bronze Age (1600-110 BC). Discuss the various debates surrounding the end of this extraordinary civilization, which plunged the country into the Greek Dark Ages, with your expert guide.

If there's time, take to the scenic wineries of the Nemea wine region. The mountains and valleys surrounding the small village of Neméa have been producing wine from the native Agiorgitiko grape for centuries. You might like to chat to the friendly vintners about the myths that surround this mysterious grape, while you share in tastings. Continue to Athens.

Hotel Grande Bretagne / *Meals: B*

Day 11: Depart Athens

Transfer to Athens airport for your onward flight. Your Guardian Angel will assist you with check-in procedures.

Meals: B

Map



Accommodation

Hotel Grande Bretagne, Athens



This 18th Century landmark is unquestionably Athens most luxurious hotel. Immaculately restored to the height of its old world grandeur, it is perfectly located at Syntagma Square in the heart of the city. The hotel's palatial interior is lavishly appointed, with restored antiques and wonderful fabrics personalising each of the 320 rooms and suites. Opt for a Junior Suite with butler service to tend to your every need.

The Grande Bretagne is ideally located for exploration of the House of Parliament and National Gardens, whilst the trendy bars, cafés and boutiques of Kolonaki Square are a short walk away.

After a day of exploration retreat to the Winter Garden where the hustle and bustle of Athens is left far behind or head to Alexander's Bar for cocktails where the 18th century tapestry of Alexander the Great is the focal point.

The Grande Bretagne not only dominates the skyline around it, meaning you're looking straight at the Parthenon, but glance to your left and you're looking straight at the Greek Parliament, with the Evzones soldiers trooping around the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier every hour.

Why we like it

- A landmark building of stunning classical architecture, the Grande Bretagne is known as the 'Royal Box' of Athens and provides excellent views of the Acropolis
- Dining options include the GB Roof Garden restaurant & Bar overlooking the Acropolis
- GB Spa with its indoor swimming pool and a fully equipped gymnasium
- The splendid outdoor rooftop pool is a welcome rest from the Athenian sun
- A&K recommends the Deluxe Suites, which provide spacious, stylish accommodation, mixing luxurious furnishings with warm décor to create a wonderful retreat in the heart of Athens

Nafplia Palace Hotel & Villas



Nafplia Palace Hotel & Villas boasts breathtaking views across the Bay of Argolis and Nafplion. This luxurious hotel offers beautiful rooms overlooking the town and the sea, marble bathrooms and villas and bungalows with private pools or an outdoor jacuzzi.

Nafplia Palace Hotel & Villas features two bars and three restaurants, each with a unique style and atmosphere to suit any mood. Those looking to unwind can choose to relax in the beautiful swimming pool with beguiling bay views, and those visiting on business can take advantage of and the well-appointed facilities for private meetings.

Surrounded by attractions, a 15-minute walk will take you to the Archaeological Museum and the Syntagma square of Nafplion, which is renowned for its charming mix of ancient walls and ruins, medieval castles, neoclassical architecture and spectacular scenery.

Abercrombie & Kent

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